



MAP HOUSING WORKING GROUP MEETING MINUTES

May 27, 2021 - 1:00 pm online

PRESENT:

Derek Chu (Kinbrace), Doug Peat (JHC), James Grunau (JHC), Brad Kinnie (JHC), Barry Growe (JHC), Derek Chu (Kinbrace), Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace), Ryan Reid (Kinbrace), Richard Belcham (inasmuch), Tammy Johnson, (inasmuch), Jenny Lam (Options), Joni Rose (MUNI), Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC), Nicole Stinson (BC Housing), Mahi Khalaf (SOS-ISSofBC), Dustin Lupick (HSABC), Jenny Moss (MAP)

Guest: Wes Everaars – Lookout

Regrets: Julia Wu (BC211)

Chair: Derek Chu

Welcome and land acknowledgement.

- The agenda for this meeting was approved.
- The March 25, 2021 HWG Meeting Minutes were approved.

Updates

- **BC CHARMS Project – Marzieh Nezakat (MOSAIC)**

Marzieh updated new HWG attendees on BC CHARMS project.

- The **Report book** is under review and will be gorgeous – it is about the challenges and hopes for claimants seeking housing. Hope to get it out to everyone soon.
- **Database:** Under advice from BC CHARMS Advisory Committee and technical consultants have decided to go with the system provided by **Social Solutions – Apricot 360**
Received a demo from them and everyone was impressed – has 90% of what is needed, and the rest is highly customizable
Easy to use: it has 'drag and drop' functionality
Now the contract is signed the project will start customization in June.

- **Soft program within BC CHARMS –Innovative Housing Solutions for Refugee Claimants**
New RFP will be distributed and deadline for applications is June 15 11pm.
info will be sent out soon via MAP.

- **"Looking for Home" BCNPHA Roundtable Update – HWG planning group**
Event is on June 15 at 1pm and details are on the website and limited registration is open.
Marzieh: decided together to include 2 videoclips that MOSAIC is making:
 - 1) Feature of 2 claimants sharing their lived experience on their housing journey
 - 2) Landlord – sharing experience on renting to claimants and their expectations
 Sari Alef and Jacqui Sarvini (MOSAIC) have made the videos – lived experiences were very heart-warming.
CEO of Affordable Housing society made the landlord video with MOSAIC.
They are recorded and now in processing.
Tammy and Ryan added that they look forward to the conversation and that it is perfect for new housing providers who want to find out more about renting to claimants.
MAP Housing providers encouraged to register + SOS and MOSAIC workers who are involved with finding housing.
Question: who else can register?
Open dialogue – definitely open to government so please register.
Tammy – mentioned you need to sign up with BCNPHA first before you can register. This has been mentioned on the website too.
Request – please ask BCNPHA to record.
Jenny: still needing speaker bios and to tie up some loose ends

- **Update on the CCR housing Working Group – Mohammed Zaqout (Kinbrace)**
Mohammed attended meeting – they have just met twice:
 - put Terms of Reference together
 - figuring out what they want to focus on based on discussions.
 Purpose of CCR Housing Network: CCR housing network provides an organizing space for CCR members to collectively advocate for safe, secure and affordable housing for all newcomers to Canada.
There has been a hiatus until June – so we will share next month.
Doug cannot attend next CCR Housing Meeting – can anyone attend in his place?
Derek added that the other co-chair is supposed to be able to step in, but since the positions are in election then we should wait for the results to see who would be attending alongside Mohammed.

- **Responses from Non-Profit Housing Providers on the \$4.8mil RFP**
Following our decision as a group last month to speak to non-profit housing providers to see if they were interested in partnering on a project to respond to RFP some members have had discussions.
Doug asked Joni (as representing MUNI) if she wished to stay for the discussion – agreed she would stay on as an observer.
Has anyone spoken to any non-profit housing advisors and what is their reaction?
 - Richard - From Fraser Valley – nobody has mentioned it.
 - James - has spoken to some but there is no evidence that anyone else is applying for this funding
 - Doug – has spoken to two of the larger ones who – both said the criteria was outside their mandates and could not apply. Disappointing news as they are already partners of ours who provide housing for claimants.

- **Preparing for a refugee claimant influx - next steps – Richard Belcham (inasmuch)**

The next step is to prepare a report based on the survey – about 40% complete – once done the report will go to Barry for his expertise and then will be ready to go to MAP group for comment at the June meeting for a decision on next steps.

Assume that this will involve a task force to take it forward to decision making with government. Although Richard added that some of the suggestions that came out have already been welcomed by government and some initiatives are under consideration.

Will be ready for the June MAP meeting – so it will be included on HWG Agenda.

Presentation and Discussion – Lessons from Lookout by Wes Everaars (Director of Development)

Introduction: Wes is behind the scenes at Lookout building it up over the years – he has broad experience both in shelters and in other areas including a refugee organization in Netherlands during Horn of Africa Emergency. Wes started a program of skills training for refugees who were then almost all returned to their countries but had skills they could use there.

On return to Canada Wes worked at a French education centre then SUCCESS, Inter-Cultural Services Society and finally for many years at PICS where he worked with Charon Gill on employment and anti-racism projects.

Finally met Shayne Williams at Lookout and was impressed by his advocacy for the most vulnerable – worked in health solutions, then followed Shane to Lookout. Made Director of Development at Lookout to build services e.g., Works closely with MSDPR e.g. to build LEAP (Lookout Ethical Employment Program).

Work with most highly entrenched individuals to provide housing and trauma-informed support wherever they are in the continuum.

- 55 sites, 12 are shelters and rest are scattered housing sites, transition housing and some affordable housing as well.
- Over 3,000 individuals using their services.
- Health programs: Safe consumption sites in Vancouver, Surrey, and Vancouver Island – Overdose Prevention sites too, health contact sites opening up. – Opioid crisis has brought up the need for trauma-informed and trust- based relationships.
- Staff training very important. Staff need to look at root causes for why people are using and harming themselves? Often reasons are poverty, dysfunctional families, mental health, and social issues. Also vital is building a stable trusting relationship - try to get people to stay put to work with a trusted person to support them. Once stabilized they will move forward and work with some of the many programs Lookout offers.
Building support services is fundamental – one example is to make food services healthy and culturally informed. This element has become very important.
- Also responsible for property acquisition – with BC Housing and CHMC to acquire large new sites. Identified that claimants make up a substantial percentage of the 20% of clients who are newcomers.

Lookout becomes a safety net for claimants which signifies there aren't other options or support in the community for those just seeking housing. (Same statistics for PHS, Atira, Elizabeth Fry etc). Alarming that so many newcomers have to access shelter system for housing, and this will be a factor in future Lookout development plans.

Currently have a DTES project with shelter rate units (33%). Same model in Chilliwack and Mission. And applying for opportunities throughout 15 communities on the island as well as FV out to Chilliwack.

Majority in Vancouver and Surrey but also see a need on the north shore for housing & support services. Lookout wants to work with us as partners.

Questions

Doug – claimants have different barriers than those with addictions, they are overcoming trauma and culture shock – how are they fitting in?

Response: not doing well – get shell-shocked by the opioid crisis sufferers who can be very scary. Lookout tries to link them immediately with refugee claimant settlement agencies who understand their needs - but for those who will not self-identify as claimants they need help to get started. Try to get them into their work program to build skills so they can get jobs and providing supportive relationships.

Joni – we know shelter system is not a good fit for claimants. Why do you think there hasn't been the creation of a refugee-specific shelter in BC?

Response – advocacy is the most important feature – need to increase advocacy for this sector. (Examples from TFW and Opioid crisis)

Agencies need to look at needs and create strategic plans towards housing with measurable goals to bring to BC Housing and other funders to find solutions.

Lots of research into funding envelopes – ISSofBC did a great job with creating awareness that resulted in their Welcome Center and publicizing this as a new service opportunity.

Joni – what are the barriers?

Response: somewhat self-inflicted, needs to be more hard work at governance level in agencies. Work through a great consultant (get seed funding from CHMC so no fundraising required). Build partnerships like working with municipalities, landowner, and housing funders.

Richard – what advice for smaller agencies who don't have land or houses to start with?

Response – fundraise – launch a campaign, attract donations.

access community funds to purchase land e.g., Lookout's purchase of duplex in Surrey – grant funds and fundraising managed the down payment, and the rents will pay down the mortgage. Needs a strategy: identifying need and financial sources.

Richard – how does a small organization get started? Multiple barriers at our scale.

how did you get started at the beginning?

Response – first house was in DTES where they rented a house which was bequeathed to Lookout. Applied for funding in the 70's with support from likeminded politicians and people in DTES to bring awareness to poverty issues and led to buying up hotels.

Or partner with other agencies – has talked to Doug about partnership. And would like to speak some more.

Doug: appreciate the partnership idea If we could move at least 5% of claimants from shelters to more appropriate housing that would be an achievement.

Response: a good example is the 2017 merging of Lookout with Mood Disorder Association of BC to build stronger capacity for counselling and support to clients around mental health. Has been a huge benefit for both agencies to provide programs together. Decision based on which agency has which skill set in order to acquire sites and provide services.

Nicole: concur around advocacy and partnership work and updates of trauma-informed work very much. Do you collect demographic data on claimants? There is no awareness of need based on scale, so BC Housing is responding on a case-by-case basis, but they need more data.

Response: not specifically – do ask if prepared to disclose identity (race/gender) but we do not ask for RC status – hope to change that.

Nicole – better demographic data collection is a priority for BC Housing – because claimants are eligible but they are never properly identified or highlighted as a priority group. Hear stories of split families and traumatization.

Richard – BC CHARMS will provide those statistics once it is set up. Encouraged Lookout to use it once it is running.

Joni – agreed with Nicole – we need the data.

Response: please share Wes' email and we can discuss data collection.

Doug – concern about time – over 3,000 claimants arrived in BC in 2019 and filling shelters – how can we make the priority now? Before the borders open.

Wes replied that their data system – HIFUS – that they share with BC Housing may be able to help. Will need to identify the new variables they need to collect in data.

(From Dustin (HSABC) in chat:

2020 Homeless Report collected data on immigrants, and Refugee claimants in particular. In the count, 25 individuals identified as a RC, 23 of whom were staying at a shelter.

https://www.vancitycommunityfoundation.ca/sites/default/files/uploads/HC2020_FinalReport.pdf

Doug thanked Wes for his informative presentation.

Wes can be contacted at wese@lookoutsociety.ca

Business

• Need to elect a new Co-chair for HWG

Procedure for the election and nomination of a Housing Working Group Co-chair in June:

- One year term – need to replace both

Criteria for nomination:

- Nominee must be part of HWG and a member of MAP in good standing (can join now)

- Can self-nominate

- Must have the approval from their agency

- Deadline for nominations week before next meeting so June 17

Doug wants to stand another year to help ensure continuity – Derek is stepping down so please consider the opportunity.

- **Discussion on Referrals during COVID - are there other sources that we are missing?**

Derek commented that according to IRCC there have been over 100 claims per month – but they are not contacting Kinbrace. Are we contacting the right people to connect?

Ryan and Moe have been in contact with different agencies: Centralized referral person is Gaston at SOS (ISSofBC), bc211, now started contacting Belkin House, director of quarantine sites, IHC, - doing what the housing search workers normally do but still not finding much need.

Brad verified this is the same experience at Journey Home Community – relies on same sources but still have vacancies.

Jenny: Covenant House were asking for housing and should be added to HWG as their youth need help. Add Covenant House

(Ryan from the CHAT: Another great organization which shelters youth under age 25 is <https://www.directionsyouthservices.ca> located in Downtown Vancouver and their Manager Claire Ens has said they used to get many refugee claimants.

Agency Updates

Derek (Kinbrace) new research project: ‘**Changing the Way We Welcome Refugee Claimants**’. Created a Steering Committee and have recently hired a researcher who starts work June 1.

Kinbrace vacancies – 2 vacancies currently: please refer to Mohammed, Gaston at SOS-ISSofBC or bc211 and by June 1st will have a 2-bedroom basement suite available – for a family <5/6

Trying to find affordable housing for a single male – one bedroom in shared housing.

He has no work permit so trying to help him find something for \$400 - \$600/month.

James: JHC has 2/3 bedrooms in one of the houses.

- Meanwhile Space project is gaining momentum and **Barry** is working on this as a consultant and will be in contact.

Reception center –consultant Loyal Mackeroff has had some useful conversations and collected data. They have been talking to BC Housing at a high level (one of whom is now Deputy Minister) who are amenable and supportive of a Reception Center and want a proposal.

In contact with a few groups – churches who want to change parking lots and buildings into units – so those conversations are ongoing for collaboration with member agencies, funders re: reception center. The project is gaining momentum with the advocacy and support with everyone involved together.

Moe suggested that Loyal should contact him about reception centers in other provinces for focus groups.

Nicole – is doing some work focused on Housing Solutions for youth transitioning out of care and is including refugee claimant youth – working with Covenant House.

Richard – we have vacancies – have rooms available. Please contact.

Mahi – SOS-ISSofBC is back to in-person service so clients can book appointments for the office or over the

phone/internet.

Not many new clients – always refer to MAP members when short term housing needed.

Had an undocumented person who was in quarantine – advised client to go to CBSA and Gary Sidhu helped a lot it was a positive experience. Also updated BC211 on the communication flow in these circumstances.

Looking forward to planning process next month for opening up.

Joni – call for proposals for the Under-utilized space Q&A closes May 31.

Jenny M – MAP has developed very good relationships with at IRCC and CBSA for getting answers to questions – do send Jenny M your questions for forwarding.

World Refugee Day event information and registrations can be seen at <https://mapbc.org/world-refugee-day-celebrations-2021/>

Adjourned 2:30 - Next meeting: Thursday June 24